

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

Future Leaders Exchange Program: Host Family and School Placement and Monitoring ECA/PE/C/PY-11-04

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division

The FLEX Program for academic year 2011-2012 comprises a Placement Component, which is the subject of solicitation announcement ECA/PE/C/PY-11-04, and the Organizational and Disability Support Components, which are the subject of other grants.

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Federal Register Request for Grant Proposals (RFGP) issued by the Youth Programs Division, Office of Citizen Exchanges for the 2011-2012 academic year Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program Placement Component. Proposals must conform to the RFGP, the Guidelines in this document, and the Standard Guidelines outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Applications not adhering to such guidelines will be deemed technically ineligible. These guidelines are specific to the program mentioned above and are IN ADDITION TO the Standard Guidelines outlined in the PSI. If there is a perceived disparity between the guidelines in the PSI and the program specific language in the RFGP and POGI, the RFGP and POGI are to be the dominant references.

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

The FLEX program provides secondary school students from Eurasia the opportunity to live with American families and attend accredited American high schools where they will experience life firsthand in an American host community during the 2011-2012 academic year. Placement Component grant funding is also intended to sponsor local activities that will enhance the students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding American style democracy and civil society. This solicitation and the activities to which it refers apply only to FLEX Program students from the following Eurasian countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine. Information about the FLEX Program, including the participating countries, can be found at: <http://exchanges.state.gov/youth/programs/flex.html>.

Organization Responsibilities and Oversight

The Office of Citizen Exchanges (Office) of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (Bureau or ECA) of the Department of State (Department) is the designated Exchange Visitor Program sponsor with ultimate responsibility for the FLEX Program. All Placement Organizations (including their employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of the FLEX Program) receiving FLEX Program grants to administer the Placement Component will be considered under the terms of such grants to be "*third parties cooperating with or assisting the sponsor [i.e., The Office of Citizen Exchanges] in the conduct of the sponsor's exchange program.*" (22 CFR Section 62.2)

Because the actions of such third parties are imputed to the designated sponsor, the Bureau expects that all Placement Organizations (including their employees, officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of the FLEX Program) will both comply with the regulations and requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program and render all necessary assistance to enable the Office of Citizen Exchanges to be in full compliance with the same. Accordingly, Placement Organizations must ensure their "*employees,*

officers, agents, and third parties involved in the administration of the [students placed under FLEX Program grants] ... are adequately qualified, appropriately trained, and comply with the Exchange Visitor Program regulations” (22 CFR 62.9(f) (2)).

Relevant portions of the regulations governing the administration of an exchange visitor program are set forth in 22 CFR 62.25(d)(5), Program administration: “Sponsors must ensure that all officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf ... [a]dhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may from time to time impose.”

The Placement Component of the FLEX Program includes the following activities for which grant recipients (i.e., Placement Organizations) are responsible:

- Screening, selecting, and securing host families prior to the students’ departures from their home countries;
- Securing enrollment for the students in accredited secondary schools prior to the students’ departures from their home countries;
- Preparing and disseminating Placement Organization materials to the organization administering the “Organizational Components” by May 1, 2011, for distribution to participants at the pre-departure orientation session;
- Providing medical insurance for the students;
- Providing FLEX Program-specific training and orientation to local coordinators and host families;
- Conducting post-arrival and mid-program orientations for students;
- Implementing specialized English language programs for pre-selected students who require additional instruction prior to the beginning of the academic year;
- Implementing an independence program for the few pre-selected students with disabilities Placement Organizations are required to place;
- Conducting cultural enhancement programs;
- Facilitating skills development programs;
- Establishing guidelines for community service requirements;
- Participant Monitoring (students, local coordinators, host families) to ensure the safety and well-being of the students (see pages 12-13 for details);
- Training and monitoring employees and volunteers of Placement Organizations (including local coordinators) and third parties acting on their behalf;
- Reporting serious problems or controversies (see page 14 for details) and incidents or allegations involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation or abuse of an exchange student participant to the Bureau (and local law enforcement, if required by law);
- Reporting any situation that impacts the safety, health or well-being of FLEX participants;
- Responding to data requests from ECA;
- Conducting quarterly evaluations of the Placement Organization’s success in achieving the FLEX Program outcomes and reporting such results on a quarterly basis;
- Assisting in the administration of E-GOALS;
- Providing pre-departure support to prepare students for readjustment to their home environments; and
- Preparing a final program performance report.

Each of these responsibilities is discussed below.

Host Families: *Placement Organizations' practices and procedures for recruiting, screening, and selecting host families and placing FLEX Program participants with host families must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.*

Relevant portions of the regulations governing the placement of exchange visitors with host families are set forth in 22 CFR 62.25(l), Host family placement:

- (1) Sponsors must secure, prior to the student's departure from his or her home country, a permanent or arrival host family placement for each exchange student participant. Sponsors may not:
 - (i) Facilitate the entry into the United States for an exchange student for whom a host family placement has not been secured; and
 - (ii) Under no circumstance may more than two exchange students be placed with one host family.
- (2) Sponsors must advise both the exchange student and host family, in writing, of the respective family compositions and backgrounds of each, whether the host family placement is a permanent or temporary placement, and facilitate and encourage the exchange of correspondence between the two prior to the student's departure from the home country.

Relevant portions of the regulations governing the screening, selecting, and securing of host families are set forth in 22 CFR 62.25(j), Host family selection: Sponsors must adequately screen and select all potential host families and at a minimum must:

- (1) Provide potential host families with a detailed summary of the exchange visitor program and the parameters of their participation, duties, and obligations;
- (2) Utilize a standard application form that must be signed and dated by all potential host family applicants which provides a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment, family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with relatives.
- (3) Conduct an in-person interview with all family members residing in the home;
- (4) Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment;
- (5) Ensure that the host family has a good reputation and character by securing two personal references for each host family from the school or community, attesting to the host family's good reputation and character;
- (6) Ensure that the host family has adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations;
- (7) Verify that each member of the host family household eighteen years of age and older has undergone a criminal background check; and
- (8) Maintain a record of all documentation, including but not limited to application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews, for all selected host families for a period of three years.

With respect to the placement of FLEX Program participants, the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that Placement Organizations must follow in placing students with host families:

- Host families cannot be paid by anyone for any reason relating to FLEX Program participants.
- Placement Organizations must repeat the entire screening process annually for host families, even if they previously hosted.
- All potential host families must fill out the Placement Organization's Host Family Application and Host Family Agreement. The Placement Organization headquarters staff must ensure such documents are complete.
- Host Family Applications must contain photographs of the interior and exterior of homes, including the student's bedroom and the surrounding grounds.
- All potential host families must be interviewed in-person by the local coordinator in the host family home. The local coordinator conducting the interview must tour the home and see exactly where the student will be sleeping and that he/she has a bed to him/herself.

Placement Organizations headquarters staff and local coordinators must ensure that all FLEX Program participant host family placements are in compliance with Exchange Visitor Program regulations, the standards set forth herein, the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) standards, and that the host family and home environment are acceptable for a FLEX Program student.

- The local coordinator (or permanent staff) must conduct reference checks for all potential host family members, and a full-time permanent headquarters employee of the Placement Organization must review and evaluate the sufficiency of reference checks and upload their results into a central, web-based database maintained by the grantee organization responsible for the FLEX Organizational Components.
- Neither the employees, volunteers, or third parties acting on the behalf of Placement Organizations nor persons related to potential host families by blood or marriage may serve as character references.
- Background checks must be conducted for members of host families (and others living in the home) who are 18 years or older; this includes minors who turn 18 years old while a FLEX Program participant is residing in the home or individuals who come to live in the home during the exchange year.
- The Placement Organization will conduct an in-person FLEX-specific orientation for all screened and selected host families and provide them with the information and reference materials necessary to host and support a FLEX Program student. (Note: previous interviews during the screening and selecting process do not constitute this FLEX-specific orientation.) The Placement Organization's headquarters' staff may not permit the placement of a FLEX student in a home until this orientation has been completed.
- Host families must provide students three meals per day, their own beds, and other basic provisions necessary to ensure a safe and nurturing environment. Lunch may be packed by the student with

food provided by the host family. Except on an occasional basis, it is not acceptable for the FLEX participants to purchase their own food.

- Placement Organizations must complete all host family double placement documentation prior to the students' departures from their home countries, and send such documentation to the Flex Program Office for pre-approval.
- Placement Organizations must obtain (and retain for three years) copies of the following documents for each Program participant:
 - Name/photo page of international passport
 - J-1 visa page in passport
 - I-94 with date of U.S. entry indicated
 - DS-2019 with stamp issued at U.S. port of entry

Host Schools: *Placement Organizations' practices and procedures for placing FLEX Program participants in accredited public or private secondary educational institutions must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.*

Exchange Visitor Program regulations define an accredited educational institution as "any publicly or privately operated primary, secondary, or post-secondary institution of learning duly recognized and declared as such by the appropriate authority of the state in which such institution is located." (22 CFR 62.2) Relevant portions of the regulations governing the enrollment of exchange visitors in schools are set forth in 22 CFR 62.25(f), Student enrollment:

- (1) Sponsors must secure prior written acceptance for the enrollment of any exchange student participant in a United States public or private secondary school. Such prior acceptance must:
 - (i) Be secured from the school principal or other authorized school administrator of the school or school system that the exchange student participant will attend; and
 - (ii) Include written arrangements concerning the payment of tuition or waiver thereof if applicable.
- (2) Under no circumstance may a sponsor facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a written school placement has not been secured.
- (3) Sponsors must maintain copies of all written acceptances and make such documents available for Department of State inspection upon request.
- (4) Sponsors must provide the school with a translated "written English language summary" of the exchange student's complete academic course work prior to commencement of school, in addition to any additional documents the school may require. Sponsors must inform the prospective host school of any student who has completed secondary school in his/her home country.
- (5) Sponsors may not facilitate the enrollment of more than five exchange students in one school unless the school itself has requested, in writing, the placement of more than five students.

With respect to the placement of FLEX Program participants, the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that Placement Organizations must follow in placing students in host schools:

- Placement Organizations should work with host schools to secure their cooperation in providing academic programs appropriate to the needs and abilities of the individual students.
- Placement Organizations should encourage school administrators to utilize students as resources in the classroom and the community, including discussing options for extra-curricular activities that correlate with Program goals (e.g., Student Council, Junior Achievement, Future Business Leaders of America, volunteer opportunities).
- Placement Organizations should encourage students to take English, American History/Government, and/or Economics courses, even if they are not required courses.

Student Insurance: The Bureau offers the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) plan for students participating in the program. Detailed information on ASPE can be found in 10 FAM 240: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/dir/regs/fam/c22995.htm>. Placement Organizations wishing to use a different plan must demonstrate that such alternate plan a) provides comparable or more comprehensive coverage and b) costs less. **Coverage must begin when students depart their home countries and not conclude until they return home.** Please keep in mind that the students with disabilities who participate in the July post-arrival workshop must be covered by the Placement Organization's health insurance policy while they are participating in the workshop.

FLEX-Program Specific Training and Orientation: Placement Organizations are responsible for conducting FLEX Program-specific training for all their employees, volunteers, and third parties acting on their behalf who are involved in the Placement Component of the Project. This training should be designed to provide the methods and tools necessary for monitoring and counseling FLEX Program students, their host families, and school personnel. Placement Organizations must implement a national training program for key staff involved in supervising and training other employees, volunteers, or third parties who administer the FLEX Program placements. Placement Organizations should invite the FLEX Program Office to participate in the national training program.

Placement Organizations are also responsible for conducting FLEX Program-specific orientation programs for host families prior to the students' placement in their homes. The FLEX Program Office recommends that orientations for families hosting FLEX Program participants not include other non-FLEX Program host families to ensure that adequate attention is given to FLEX Program-related issues. FLEX Program host family orientations must include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- J-visa requirements and why it is important for students to return home at the end of the year;
- The toll-free number host families and FLEX Program participants may use to contact the Department of State;
- Communication with Placement Organization personnel, including emergency contact information;
- The Organizational Component and the Disability Component of the Project;
- Differences between the FLEX Program and other government-sponsored or private exchange programs, including the specific goals and objectives of the FLEX Program;
- Geographic and cultural nuances and their impact on student behavior;
- Incidentals allowance and monthly student stipend (e.g., their purposes and disbursement);
- Schedule of cluster/enhancement activities, including a Calendar of Events;
- Policies regarding travel and natural family visits;
- Community service requirements;
- International Education Week;

- Counseling and discipline procedures;
- Family and student expectations;
- Program components, including FLEX Program opportunities such as Civic Education Workshop, online chats, spur-of-the-moment initiatives, etc.
- E-GOALS evaluation procedures; and
- Alumni programming.

Student Orientation: *Placement Organizations’ practices and procedures for FLEX Program student orientation must meet the general Exchange Visitor Program regulations and the secondary school student category-specific orientation requirements.*

Relevant portions of the regulations governing Exchange Visitor Program orientation are set forth in 22 CFR 62.10(c): Sponsors shall offer appropriate orientation for all exchange visitors....Orientation shall include, but not be limited to, information concerning:

- (1) Life and customs in the United States;
- (2) Local community resources (e.g., public transportation, medical centers, schools, libraries, recreation centers, and banks), to the extent possible;
- (3) Available health care, emergency assistance, and insurance coverage;
- (4) A description of the program in which the exchange visitor is participating;
- (5) Rules that the exchange visitors are required to follow under the sponsor’s program;
- (6) Address of the sponsor and the name and telephone number of the responsible officer; and
- (7) Address and telephone number of the Exchange Visitor Program Services of the Department of State and a copy of the Exchange Visitor Program brochure outlining the regulations relevant to the exchange visitors.

Relevant portions of the regulations set forth at 22 CFR 62.25(g)(5) governing secondary school student orientation follow: “All sponsors must provide exchange students, prior to their departure from their home countries, with ... [a]n identification card, which lists the exchange student’s name, United States host family placement address and telephone number, and a telephone number which affords immediate contact with the program sponsor, the program sponsor’s organizational representative, and Department of State in case of emergency. Such cards may be provided in advance of home country departure or immediately upon entry into the United States.”

Post-Arrival Orientation: With respect to the post-arrival orientations of FLEX Program participants, the Office of Citizen Exchanges requires that Placement Organizations prepare materials for and conduct a FLEX Program-specific arrival orientation program. The following topics must be included as part of post-arrival orientation:

- Goals of the FLEX Program;
- Rules, regulations, and expectations;
- The toll-free number students may use to contact the Department of State;
- Role of the local representative;
- Personal goals;

- Keys to a successful exchange experience;
- School life and academic opportunities and expectations;
- Schedule of upcoming events and activities;
- Community service;
- International Education Week (November);
- Cultural misunderstandings and sensitive topics (e.g., attitude/gratitude, personal hygiene, religion);
- Computer etiquette and usage;
- Student opportunities, including those offered through the FLEX Program (e.g., Civic Education Workshop);
- Budgeting;
- Communication with friends and family at home; and
- A brief overview of alumni activities that will await returning participants.

Specialized English Language Programs: Placement Organizations are responsible for providing appropriate pre-program tutoring for approximately ten percent (10%) of their FLEX Program students who have been identified as needing English language enhancement. These are students who are otherwise excellent candidates, but need additional instruction to improve their English language skills. Each Placement Organization is responsible for planning English enhancement activities for its own students requiring language tutoring, and such activities should be clearly described in the Program Narrative. All Language Programs should focus on conversational English so students will be better prepared to take part in classroom activities and discussions at the start of the school year.

Grant funds cover the English Language Program Component of the Placement Component. The requirements of the English Language Program Component are set forth below:

- Students live with host families who have been fully vetted pursuant to the host family screening and selecting guidelines, set forth above.
- Placement Organizations may secure temporary host families for students participating in an English Language Program when the programs take place in different geographic locales than the schools in which these students have been enrolled for the academic year.
- Placement Organizations will arrange and provide student transportation from temporary to permanent communities, as required.
- Designated instructors will assist both with language development and adjustment challenges. For example, an instructor should be available to facilitate school registration and help students choose classes and extracurricular activities, as required.
- The English Language Program Component should consist of a minimum of four hours of intensive instruction each day for no fewer than 15 days.
- The English Language Program Component should be individualized to meet each student's specific needs.

The English Language Program curriculum should focus on oral/aural proficiency, including conversation practice, comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary development, and sentence patterns. Less emphasis should be placed on grammar, as the English curriculum of schools in

Eurasia is primarily grammar-based.

- Placement Organizations will include reports detailing the total number of classroom hours and curriculum for each student participating in the English Language Program Component in their first Quarterly Reports.

Independence Programs for Students with Disabilities: The FLEX Program has provided special assistance to about 250 specifically targeted Eurasian students since its inception. The students are selected through a process that takes their specific disabilities into account, but they are expected to meet the same criteria as those of the non-disabled students. For more information about the selection process, please see: <http://exchanges.state.gov/youth/programs/flex/recruitment.html>.

During the last week of July, students with disabilities will participate in a week-long, post-arrival Preparatory Workshop, conducted by the organization responsible for the Disability Support Component of the Project. The elements of the Disability Support Component include:

- Thoroughly assessing each student's condition and specific needs and providing a report on the assessment to the appropriate Placement Organization.
- Facilitating transportation of the students to their permanent host communities.
- Providing Placement Organizations with support and resources throughout the year.

Once the FLEX Program students with disabilities arrive in their permanent host communities, Placement Organizations are responsible for implementing Independence Programs as follows:

- Depending on the feedback from the Preparatory Workshop, the program should include activities that help the students get around on their own, do homework, do chores, use public transportation, practice using new equipment, and other similar activities.
- If the student with disabilities has not been identified as needing language or independence training, the Placement Organization has the option of arranging other types of enhancements or community activities during this period before school begins. This may include the involvement of peers from the local school who can help with the student's acculturation. Many of these students have not attended mainstream classes before, so having an opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers will be important in preparing for school.
- Placement Organizations must include reports detailing their Independence Programs and the students' individual progress in their first Quarterly Reports.

Cultural Enhancement Programs: Placement Organizations are required to conduct a Cultural Enhancement Program during the academic year to increase the participants' understanding of American culture, values, and history. These activities should expose students to key elements of American civil society and foster dialogue and enduring ties between the students and their host communities. Applicants must include a schedule of proposed enhancement activities for the 2011-2012 academic year in their Program Narrative.

Examples of Cultural Enhancement Programs conducted in the past include briefings on local/state government and the judicial system; programs on community issues and concerns (e.g., environmental

protection, substance abuse prevention, HIV awareness); and activities that exposed participants to and increased their understanding of the diversity that exists in American society.

There is a maximum \$300 per student activities fund to cover the cost of these activities. Enhancement funds may not be spent on packaged sightseeing trips.

Skills Development Programs: Placement Organizations are encouraged to earmark a portion of the \$300 per student enhancement activities fund for specialized training for the development of leadership skills such as public speaking, team-building, critical thinking, and goal-setting so that the students are prepared to apply these skills once they return to their home countries. Proposed training should explore issues that foster civic responsibility, tolerance, public service, and conflict resolution and management. Placement Organizations are encouraged to interact with reputable, local youth groups and to use free resources. Costs for these educational materials developed to support Skills Development Programs should appear in a separate line item in the budget. The proposal also should provide details as to how educational materials will be used during the year.

Placement Organizations are also encouraged to provide scholarships to enable FLEX Program students to participate in local and national leadership trainings, such as the Annual National Service-Learning Conference, Youth Noise Summits, and Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership (HOBY) Seminars.

Community Service Requirements: All FLEX Program students are required to participate in community service activities. Placement Organizations are expected to provide participants and their host families with clear and precise guidelines that reflect the standards, requirements, and expectations of their organizations, including but not limited to the following:

- Minimum number of hours and type (e.g., volunteer work or other tasks) of required community service. Examples of other tasks include writing essays about the impact community service activities have had on students, taking photographs of or corresponding with individuals who benefited from the student's efforts;
- Method by which Placement Organizations will monitor community service;
- Consequences of failing to meet this obligation; and
- Incentives, if any, to engage in community service.

Costs associated with implementing community service activities should appear in a separate line item in the budget.

Monitoring Students and Host Families: *Placement Organizations' practices and procedures for monitoring FLEX Program participants must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25.*

Relevant portions of the regulations governing program administration that involve monitoring host families and FLEX students are set forth in 22 CFR 62.25(d) *Program administration*. Sponsors must ensure that all officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf:....

(2) Make no student placement beyond 120 miles of the home of a local organizational representative authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from an exchange student's participation in the exchange visitor program;

(3) Ensure that no organizational representative act as both host family and area supervisor for any exchange student participant; [and]

(4) Maintain, at minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the student and host family, and ensure that the school has contact information for the local organizational representative and the program sponsor's main office[....]

With respect to the monitoring of FLEX Program participants, the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that Placement Organizations must follow:

- Only the Office of Citizen Exchanges can make the decision to terminate and repatriate a student; under no circumstances will Placement Organizations, their employees, volunteers, or third parties acting on their behalf inform FLEX Program participants that their programs will terminate and they will be repatriated, without specific directions from the Office of Citizen Exchanges.
- Local coordinators will monitor students' progress in academics, social adjustment, activities such as community service, exemplary achievements, and other program-related endeavors and track their progress in the local coordinators' monthly contact reports.
- Local coordinators will identify the need for additional support and counseling for participants, document the circumstances, and notify both full-time permanent employees of the Placement Organizations and the Office of Citizen Exchanges of the situation(s).

Placement Organizations will develop and implement plans to monitor all student placements (e.g., participants and host families) in addition to the monthly contact required by the regulations. Among other things, the monitoring plan must ensure that:

- Full-time permanent employee(s) or an official designate of the Placement Organization must conduct site visits to the homes of at least 20% or 10 (whichever is greater) of the FLEX Program students placed by their organizations. The purpose of these visits is to see the FLEX Program students in their host environments. The visits should cover a combination of clustered and non-clustered students. These site visits should be conducted in close coordination with the Bureau to complement Office of Citizen Exchanges site visits and ensure maximum coverage.
- Full-time permanent employee(s) or an official designate of the Placement Organization will develop reporting systems to distribute and collect monthly updates/communications/reports which students will fill out and submit themselves. The type of system is left to the discretion of the Placement Organizations. Systems that demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency in identifying student issues will be deemed more competitive. Additionally, plans which describe ways to attain 100% student participation will be deemed more competitive. The purpose of these student reported monthly updates is to allow FLEX students to self report issues and to allow the Placement Organizations to track these issues effectively. Placement Organizations must promptly notify the Office of Citizen Exchanges about problems, inconsistencies, or concerns that are identified from these updates.

Training and Monitoring Employees and Volunteers of Placement Organizations and Third Parties Acting on Their Behalf: *Placement Organizations’ practices and procedures for training and monitoring their officers, employees, and volunteers, and third parties acting on their behalf who are involved in the administration of the FLEX Program must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25(d)(1): “Sponsors must ensure that all officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf ... [a]re adequately trained and supervised and that any such person in direct personal contact with exchange students has been vetted through a criminal background check.”*

With respect to the training and monitoring of the employees and volunteers of Placement Organizations and the third parties acting on their behalf, the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that Placement Organizations must follow:

- All local coordinators working with FLEX Program students will fill out a local coordinator application.
- Full-time permanent employee(s) or an official designate of the Placement Organization will interview and train all local coordinators.
- Full-time permanent employee(s) or an official designate of the Placement Organization will have substantive monthly contact with all local coordinators, in-person, via digital video conference, or by telephone. Placement Organizations will log these contacts into the central, web-based database maintained by the grantee organization responsible for the Organizational Component. At a minimum, such logs must include the following information: Names of the Local Coordinators, their managing Regional Coordinators (if any) and the FLEX Program students for whom they are responsible; the name and position of the full-time permanent employee(s) of the Placement Organization; the date and method of the contact; and a short, but comprehensive summary of the topics covered. Such narratives must be sufficient to substantiate the current well-being of the FLEX Program participants. Proposals that outline effective and creative methods of ensuring substantive contact with local coordinators will be deemed more competitive.

Reporting Obligations: *Placement Organizations, their officers, employees, and third parties acting on their behalf must meet both the general Exchange Visitor Program reporting requirements and the secondary school student category-specific reporting requirements.*

Relevant portions of the regulations set forth at 22 CFR 62.13(b), serious problem or controversy, follow: “Sponsors shall inform the Department of State promptly by telephone (confirmed promptly in writing) or facsimile of any serious problem or controversy which could be expected to bring the Department of State or the sponsor’s exchange visitor program into notoriety or disrepute.”

Relevant portions of the regulations set forth at 22 CFR 62.25(m), Reporting requirements, follow:

- (1) Sponsors must immediately report to the Department any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation or abuse of an exchange student participant. Sponsors must also report such allegations as required by local or state statute or regulation. Failure to report such incidents to the Department and, as required by state law or regulation, to local law enforcement authorities shall be grounds for the summary suspension and termination of the sponsor’s Exchange Visitor Program designation.

- (2) A summation of all situations which resulted in the placement of exchange student participants with more than one host family or school placement; and
- (3) Provide a report of all final academic year and semester program participant placements by August 31 for the upcoming academic year or January 15 for the Spring semester and calendar year. The report must provide at a minimum, the exchange visitor student's full name, Form DS-2019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placement (current U.S. address), and school (site of activity) address.

The Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance on reporting that Placement Organizations must follow:

- Placement Organizations will interpret "Department" in the above-referenced reporting regulations to mean both the Office of Citizen Exchanges and the Private Sector Programs Division of the Office of Designation. That is, Placement Organizations must advise both Department contacts of any matter that is required to be reported by a sponsor pursuant to the above regulations.
- Placement Organizations must provide the Office of Citizen Exchanges with reports of all situations that impact the safety, health, or well-being of FLEX Program participants.
- Placement Organizations must provide the Office of Citizen Exchanges with electronic versions of fall placement reports by August 31 that include all FLEX Program participants that the Placement Organizations have placed.
- In a timely fashion, Placement Organizations must distribute to all FLEX students information the Office of Citizen Exchanges has prepared regarding Department initiated FLEX Program activities. Such activities include: International Education Week, Civic Education Workshop, Global Youth Service Day, and spur-of-the-moment program-related activities that may arise during the year (e.g., online chats, meetings, briefings).
- All promotional materials must identify the FLEX Program as a U.S. Department of State-sponsored program.
- On a timely basis, Placement Organizations must inform the Office of Citizen Exchanges of any publicity that highlights students or the FLEX Program in a positive light or otherwise strengthen outreach efforts, particularly those that involve government officials and the media. When the media interacts with FLEX Program students, Placement Organizations should make every effort to identify the FLEX Program as a U.S. Department of State-sponsored program.
- Placement Organizations must promptly notify the Office of Citizen Exchanges about problems, inconsistencies, or concerns that are identified from these updates.

Relevant portions of the regulations set forth at 22 CFR 62.70(b), SEVIS reporting requirements, follow:

"Current U.S. address. Sponsors shall ensure that the actual and current U.S. address of all sponsored participants is reported to SEVIS. Sponsors shall update the actual and current U.S. address information for participants within 21 days of being notified by a participant of a change in his or her address. A sponsor's failure to update the actual and current U.S. address information within 21 days of receipt may be grounds for revocation of their

Exchange Visitor Program status. Sponsors shall report a U.S. mailing address, *i.e.*, P.O. box address, in those limited circumstances where mail cannot be delivered to the current and actual U.S. address. If a U.S. mailing address is reported to SEVIS, sponsors shall also maintain a record of the actual and current U.S. address, e.g., dorm, building and room number, for that exchange visitor.”

- Placement Organizations are required to enter complete, accurate, and up-to-date placement information into the web-based database that is linked to administration of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), including host family changes that may occur during the year.
- Placement Organizations shall promptly notify the Office of Citizen Exchanges of developments that have a significant impact on the grant-supported activities or in case of problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the Placement Organization’s ability to meet the objectives of the award. This notification shall include a statement of the action taken or contemplated, and specifically request assistance from the Office if needed to resolve the situation.

Quarterly Performance Reports: Placement Organizations are responsible for implementing mechanisms for monitoring participants and reporting to the program officer on FLEX Program success and impact on a quarterly basis throughout the year. They must submit quarterly performance reports that address, at a minimum, the following topics: past and planned program activities; financial status (*i.e.*, identify financial variations from original budgets); and the strengths and weaknesses of the Placement Organization’s overall experience with the FLEX Program as well as individual participants. Such program descriptions should be supported by qualitative narrative and quantitative data. Placement Organizations should conduct surveys or otherwise seek information on the following topics from parties involved in the placements:

- Student achievements;
- Specialized trainings and/or workshops;
- Program impact on schools, host families, and communities;
- Specific challenges and their solutions;
- Monitoring students, host families, and local coordinators; and
- Ongoing evaluation of program success in achieving stated objectives.

The first quarterly performance report must also include information on the English Language and Independence Programs that took place prior to the academic year. Placement Organizations must submit to the program officer and the grants officer a hard copy original plus ***one*** copy of all quarterly performance reports no more than 30 days after the reporting period end dates: September 30, 2011; December 31, 2011; March 31, 2012; and June 30, 2012, unless the Placement Organization has specified alternative quarterly reporting dates in its application. A SF-PPR, “Performance Progress Report” Cover Sheet must be submitted with all performance reports, including the SF-PPR-E and SF-PPR-F.

Final Performance Report: Placement Organizations must submit to the program office, as well as the grants office, a hard copy original plus ***one*** copy of a final performance report. This report must include a program and financial report and should include both qualitative and quantitative data to indicate strengths and weaknesses of the exchanges and placements of all FLEX Program participants. A SF-PPR, “Performance Progress Report” Cover Sheet must be submitted with the final performance report, including the SF-PPR-E and SF-PPR-F.

Performance Report Summary Document: In addition to Final Performance Report identified above, Placement Organizations are required to submit concise one-page documents summarizing their performance reports, and listing and describing their grant activities and a list of their directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees). The Office of Citizen Exchange will transmit these two documents to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA). As required by FFATA reporting requirements, this information will be available to the public via OMB's USASpending.gov website.

E-GOALS: The Bureau's Office of Policy and Evaluation will conduct evaluations of the FLEX Program through E-GOALS, its online system for surveying program participants and collecting data about program performance.

E-GOALS system evaluations assist the Office of Citizen Exchange and its program grantees in meeting the requirements of the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, i.e., measuring results of federal agency programs in meeting pre-determined performance goals and objectives. All FLEX Program participants will take three standardized online surveys:

- Pre-program survey;
- Post-program survey; and
- Follow-up survey, approximately six months to a year after the conclusion of the program.

These surveys, in conjunction with Placement Organizations' own evaluation instruments, help the Office of Citizen Exchange assess student satisfaction with the Program; student attitudes and views; the extent of learning and skill development (including leadership); reliance on new learning and skills in their studies, at work, and in their communities; and their efforts to share new ideas, knowledge, and insights. The students will complete the standardized pre-program and follow-up surveys in their home countries. Placement Organizations are responsible for conducting the post-program surveys prior to the participants' departure from the United States.

Placement Organizations will be working directly with an E-GOALS evaluator in the Bureau's Office of Policy and Evaluation. Placement Organizations will be responsible for monitoring the response rates for their FLEX Program students through collection of a certificate issued by the E-GOALS system to each student upon completion of the survey. In addition, Placement Organizations will be required to:

- Provide the E-GOALS evaluator with all contact information and biographical data of Program participants;
- Provide all participants with information about the E-GOALS survey, i.e., advising students they are required to take all three surveys and assuring them that the surveys are completely confidential, anonymous, and used only for evaluative purposes;
- Notify students of the E-GOALS survey link, information about E-GOALS, and survey instructions;
- Allocate sufficient time for E-GOALS surveying at the end of the program;
- Send E-GOALS "reminders" to students, local coordinators, and host families as necessary; and
- Provide additional assistance to the E-GOALS evaluator, as needed, in order to coordinate and facilitate E-GOALS surveying. This may include making arrangements for students to take the surveys on paper, if necessary. In this case, Placement Organizations are responsible for all survey coordination, e.g., reproducing the surveys, monitoring the surveying on-site, and sending the paper surveys to the E-GOALS evaluator.

Mid-Program Orientation: Placement Organizations must meet with all FLEX Program participants approximately halfway through their exchange programs, preferably in January. The purpose of this meeting is to assess their progress in achieving Program and personal goals and provide the necessary assistance to enable them to meet these goals. The issues to discuss must include, at a minimum, the following:

- Satisfaction with host family placement;
- Adjustment and cross-cultural concerns;
- Challenges and strategies to deal with these issues;
- Identification of program and personal goals, progress in achieving these goals, and strategy for achieving these goals;
- Return travel (e.g., deciding on a return date, travel procedures, luggage, and overweight baggage costs);
- Alumni programming (e.g., alumni associations, ideas for alumni activities, and registering on the DOS Alumni website); and
- E-GOALS evaluation (May).

Pre-Departure Support: Placement Organizations are responsible for preparing students for bringing closure to their American exchange experiences as well as re-entry to their home countries. Placement Organizations must ensure that students receive relevant information concerning FLEX Program alumni opportunities in their respective countries and discuss individual plans for possible alumni projects. The following points should be included as part of re-entry training:

- Closure – preparing to leave and saying goodbye:
 - The importance of keeping in contact with host families and American friends;
- Re-entry – expectations and challenges:
 - How families will treat returning exchange students,
 - How friends will treat returning exchange students, and
 - Stages of reverse culture shock and techniques for coping;
- Changes:
 - How the exchange students' home countries have changed in the past year,
 - How have the exchange students changed in the past year, and
 - How have the exchange students' goals changed in the past year;
- Connecting with FLEX Program alumni:
 - Identifying new skills that can help FLEX Program participant alumni, and
 - Ideas for possible alumni activities;
- Teaching people at home about the United States; and
- J-1 Visa two-year home residency requirement.

Leadership and Re-entry Workshop for Students with Disabilities: After having enjoyed the accessibility and other disability support available in the United States, FLEX Program students with disabilities frequently are not well-prepared to return to the less disability-friendly environments of their Eurasian home countries. The organization responsible for the Disability Support Component of the Project will conduct a special re-entry workshop in order to facilitate readjustment of FLEX Program participants with disabilities to less disability-friendly environments. That organization will also arrange transportation and other logistics. The following points should be included as part of re-entry training for students with disabilities:

- How to further develop leadership skills and foster empowerment; and
- Identification of tools to enable students to do outreach and work in support of disability rights in their home countries.

Program Evaluation

Applicants must include in their proposals a plan for evaluating their success in performing the enumerated responsibilities necessary to achieve the program objectives in such a way that they were able to reach the stated outcomes. Such evaluation mechanisms should be able to track progress during the program (on a per-participant and per-activity basis) and, at the end of the program, to assess the cumulative effect of all aspects of the participants' exchange experiences (e.g., activities, host family selection, contacts with local coordinators) over which the Placement Organizations had control. Evaluation techniques may be in any form such as a survey or questionnaire, and applicants should include a description of their evaluation methodologies along with a draft of their plans.

Plans should address the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of an evaluation plan depends on how well it specifies intended outcomes, clearly defines outcome measurement techniques, identifies timing of outcome measurement, and clearly describes data collection strategies for each outcome (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups). Evaluation plans that deal with all levels of outcomes will be deemed more competitive.

Placement Organizations must include the results of ongoing evaluation plans in their quarterly reports, with the final quarterly report summarizing the overall program success. Applicants must maintain all data collected, including survey responses and contact information, for a minimum of three years following completion of each participant's exchange visitor program.

The Organizational Component: On-Program Support

Placement Organizations are expected to work closely and communicate with the grantee organization that recruits, selects, organizes travel and on-program support issues, i.e., the Organizational Grantee. Among other things, the Organizational Grantee will:

- Serve as a liaison between exchange students and their natural parents;
- Provide Placement Organizations with guidance on handling cross-cultural issues and problems;
- Provide data related to student recruitment and selection; and
- Send at least one representative to a two-day annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

II.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

Clustering

Applicants must submit proposals to provide the Placement Component of the project to at least 30 students; there is no maximum number. Because students should be placed where they will be most warmly welcomed and accommodated, and where they may contribute to the broadest possible understanding of their cultures, the Department encourages placements in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in a wide range of rural, urban, and suburban settings. A strong overall preference is given to organizations that choose to cluster all or most of their students. A cluster is defined as a minimum of three ECA-funded scholarship students who live within 120 miles of a local coordinator or representative, and can be brought together for activities arranged for all scholarship students in the area, such as orientations, re-entry training, and program-specific enhancement activities.

Applicants are expected to cluster a minimum of 60% of its placements and disperse the remainder throughout the country. Different local representatives may monitor students within an area so long as the students can be brought together for activities as described above. Plans proposing this option must describe in detail how the Placement Organization would accomplish this goal.

Applicants selecting the dispersal option for any of their students must describe in detail in the proposal narrative how they will ensure that local staff and volunteers are trained to deal with the specific needs and concerns of this specialized population of exchange students, such as orientation, participant monitoring and enhancement activities.

FLEX Program Participants

Most FLEX Program participants are 15-16 years old, although some are 17 years old. Under the terms of their visas, they must return to their home countries following the conclusion of their exchange program in the United States. Placement Organizations are expected to assist the State Department in enforcing this law.

The Department of State seeks to include students of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities from Eurasia. A committee of trained volunteers selects participants for the Program on the basis of merit. Finalists also undergo rigorous medical screening. Specifically, the selection criteria are achievement, social skills, and personality factors. Applicants undergo a series of exams and are interviewed in person for evaluation of their ability to adjust to new cultures and English language proficiency. Although most applicants have good English comprehension, speaking, and writing skills, a small number of those accepted into the Program (approximately 10% of each Placement Organization's overall student number) will need English enhancement training and/or independence training after arriving in host communities.

Finalists are assigned to the placement organizations through a computerized sorting process. The average group of students assigned to each organization will typically involve students of several nationalities and will likely include one or more physically challenged students.

III. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Since applicant organizations do not have the opportunity to meet with reviewing officials or otherwise discuss the merits of their applications, each proposal should describe a program in a convincing and comprehensive manner, addressing all the criteria set forth in RFGP and the other guidelines identified in the introduction to this document.

Proposals should address all elements described below succinctly and completely. Proposals may be submitted through Grants.gov only in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word,
- Microsoft Excel,
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF),
- ASCII Text (less preferable), or
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images).

Proposals should include the following information:

TAB A - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

Applications must include a completed "Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424). Applicants must obtain a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to complete Box 8(c) of the Form SF-424. Applicants may obtain DUNS numbers at no charge by contacting Dun and Bradstreet at <http://www.dunandbradstreet.com> or 1-866-705-5711.

TAB B - Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is a single double-spaced page that provides the following information:

- Name of the organization submitting the proposal
- Beginning and ending dates of the program
- Scope of the project, including the following:
 - Number of students to be placed
 - Geographic distribution of students
 - Method of placement
 - Nature of activities
- Funding level requested from the Bureau
 - Total program cost
 - Total cost sharing from applicant and other sources
 - Total per-student cost

TAB C - Calendar of Activities/Itinerary

The Calendar of Activities/Itinerary is a monthly plan of action or timetable that demonstrates the timing and organization of the responsibilities of Placement Organizations providing the Placement Component of the Project. These should include, but not be limited to, monitoring local staff, students, and host families; training events; submission of quarterly reports; and dispersal of funds and information. This is not part of the 20-page limit on the Program Narrative, discussed below.

Program Narrative

The Program Narrative is 20 single-sided double-spaced pages of text that addresses, among other things, the responsibilities outlined in the "Statement of Work" and all matters covered under the "Program Specific Guidelines," with extra attention given to the monitoring section.

The Program Narrative may be divided into sub-headings as follows:

1. Vision/Goals
 - a. Objectives (as set forth in the RFGP)
 - b. Outcomes (as set forth in the RFGP)
2. Organizational Structure and Capacity
 - a. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program objectives and outcomes.
 - b. Resources, expertise, and experience should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program objectives and outcomes.
 - c. Identification of headquarters staff responsible for program implementation.

- d. Percentage of time headquarters staff will dedicate to the FLEX program
- e. Identification of field staff:
 - i. Status as full-time, part-time, or third parties (paid or volunteer) and percentage of time dedicated to the FLEX program
 - ii. Reporting structure (both in field and to headquarters)
- f. Identification of subcontractors or implementing partners, if applicable, and description of their activities.
- g. For past recipients of Department of State Grants and/or for designated sponsors of the Exchange Visitor Program, institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and record of compliance with reporting and regulatory requirements.
- h. For new applicants, demonstrate capacity and ability to participate in the Program, including:
 - i. Financial viability
 - ii. Experience in the area of international exchange

3. Cultural Enhancement and Skills Development Programs

- a. Description of a program of events and activities to expose students to different aspects of American culture, government, attitudes, and citizens.
- b. Plans for spending the enhancement activities funds in a way that will benefit both clustered and dispersed students.
- c. Placement Organizations will be afforded flexibility with regard to the amount spent per student for dispersed students. For example, an organization may spend more on a dispersed student if the organization provides:
 - i. Cost justification, and
 - ii. Total amount requested for all students does not exceed an average of \$300 per student.
- d. Initiatives/incentives that are specific to applicant organization
 - i. Assurance that students will receive pertinent information and will be encouraged to participate in activities organized by ECA's FLEX Program Office, e.g., Civic Education Workshop
 - ii. Plans to provide scholarships and other incentives that offer skill development opportunities
- e. Proposed programs must be achievable and measurable. Strategies should creatively utilize resources at the local level to ensure an efficient use of program funds.

4. Program Participant Monitoring

- a. Field staff
 - i. Plans for recruiting, screening, selecting, and supporting local coordinators
 - ii. Plans for supporting and monitoring local coordinators
 - 1. Clustered students
 - 2. Dispersed students
- b. Host families
 - i. Plans for recruiting, screening, selecting, supporting, and monitoring host families
 - Include selection criteria to be used for evaluating the suitability of host families with respect to each of the regulatory requirements: interview; adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations; reputation and

character through character references, criminal background checks; and capacity to provide a comfortable and nurturing home environment.

- ii. Details about the host family interview, home visit, and ongoing monitoring
 - 1. Clustered students
 - 2. Dispersed students
- c. Program participants: Plans for placing, supporting, and monitoring students
- d. Checks and Balances and Contingency Plans with regard to participant monitoring at all levels (Field staff, host families, and students)
- e. Plans for the following activities and responsibilities
 - i. Implementing and monitoring mandated community service activities
 - ii. Observation of International Education Week
 - iii. Provision of scholarships and other incentives that offer skill development opportunities
 - iv. Orientation and Re-entry Training
 - 1. Plans and schedule for post-arrival, mid-program, and re-entry orientations
 - 2. Include explanation of how the topic of alumni programming will be incorporated into sessions
- f. Plan for school placements
 - i. Assurance that placements will be secured in writing prior to students' arrival
 - ii. Confirmation that placements will be in accredited schools only
 - iii. Mandatory subject classes
 - iv. Monitoring student progress, activities, and special achievements
- g. Plan for staff training
 - i. National training date and location
 - ii. Regional and local training strategies
 - iii. Initial training for new staff and ongoing training for seasoned staff
 - iv. Methods of training staff who work with dispersed students
- h. Plan for accommodating students with disabilities and students needing language enhancement training
 - i. Activities
 - ii. Means of measuring success
- i. Disbursal of funds
 - i. Incidentals Allowance
 - ii. Monthly Stipends
 - iii. Enhancements

5. Diversity

- a. Substantive support of the Bureau's Guidelines set forth in the RFGP
- b. Diversity should be reflected in the achievable and relevant features of:
 - i. Program administration (e.g., selection of participants, host families, schools, program venue, and program evaluation)
 - ii. Program content (e.g., orientations, program meetings, resource materials, and follow-up activities)

6. Multiplier Effect

- a. Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding
- b. Innovative ideas to expose American communities to the goals and activities of the FLEX program involving students, host families, and schools, such as:
 - i. Media outreach

- ii. Visits to local and national government representatives
 - iii. Internet-based applications
 - c. Substantive plans to prepare FLEX Program students for their roles as active, effective FLEX Program alumni
- 7. Reporting and Evaluation
 - a. Plan to track and evaluate Placement Organization's success in meeting the objectives and outcomes as well as the enumerated responsibilities
 - i. Evaluations should be ongoing and at program end
 - ii. Evaluations should monitor individual students and individual activities
 - iii. Evaluation should complement E-GOALS system
 - iv. Proposals should also specify ways in which students will be encouraged to complete the mandatory end-of-the-year surveys administered through the E-GOALS system
 - v. Provide samples of all monitoring and evaluation plans in Tab E
- 8. Health and Accident Insurance
 - a. Identify the insurance plan and coverage provided to FLEX Program students
 - b. If plan is other than ASPE
 - i. Provide cost comparisons
 - ii. Provide explanation of benefits of alternative plan

TAB D - Budget Submission

Applicants must submit a Form SF-424A along with a comprehensive line item budget. The budget must include and distinguish between funds requested under this RFPG and funds applicants acquire through cost-sharing or from other sources. They also must submit a Program Activity Cost Summary. Include an explanatory budget narrative and submit per participant and total costs. Per participant costs are calculated as the total grant funds requested divided by the number of participants.

Each budget must include the following costs:

- Student-specific costs
 - \$1,500 for each Language Program student (approximately ten percent of the proposed total number of students, as described on p.9), in addition to other student-specific costs
 - \$1,500 for each Independent Program student, in addition to other student-specific costs
 - \$125 per student monthly allowance for 11 months
 - \$300 per student incidentals allowance to be spent by the host family for school start-up costs and other school-related expenses (e.g., yearbook, locker fees, gym shorts) for which receipts must be presented to the placement organization
 - \$100 per student emergency expense fund to be retained by the Placement Organization for small emergency expenses (e.g., eyeglasses, minor dental problems)
 - \$300 per student for enhancement activities.
- Support and monitoring of regional and local staff; include support for spot-checks of a minimum of 20% or 10 (whichever is greater) of FLEX Program students.
- Staff travel, i.e., expenses for at least one trip for one person to Washington, D.C. to attend the two-day Youth Programs annual meeting.

Budgets also typically include but are not necessarily limited to the following items:

- National and regional coordinator trainings;

- Orientations (post-arrival, mid-program, and re-entry) for students and host families;
- Stipends and honoraria for non-salaried staff and volunteers;
- Identifying, screening (e.g., criminal background checks and interviewing), and selecting host families;
- Monitoring students and host families, trouble-shooting, counseling, and resettling students, as necessary;
- Student activities including specialized training and workshops;
- Implementing community service activities;
- Program materials (including an explanation of how materials will be used);
- Administrative costs (e.g., salaries, communication, and supplies);
- Promotional materials, including website development;
- Mandatory school fees, including registration and books; and
- Program-related initiatives, such as scholarships to participate in leadership training events and other incentives.

Cost sharing: All cost sharing declared in the proposal budget must be auditable. Applicants are encouraged to develop sources of funding to complement the grant funds. Private partnerships with corporations or foundations are encouraged. Direct contributions from the applicant organization itself are welcome, both cash and in-kind (i.e., indirect costs). Costs borne by host families are considered “in-kind contributions” and may not be declared as a cost share item.

TAB E - Additional Illustrative Information and Data

Include additional illustrative information and data that will strengthen and provide additional detail to the application, e.g., copies of detailed participant monitoring and project evaluation plans, letters of endorsement, commitments from all implementing partners or subcontractors, and maximum two-page resumes of U.S. and foreign program staff.

TAB F - SF-424B, “Assurances – Non-construction Programs,” First Time Applicant Documents, and Additional documentation

First time applicant organizations and each organization which has not received an assistance award (grant or cooperative agreement) from the Bureau during the past three (3) years, must submit a copy of its Charter or Articles of Incorporation and a list of its current Board of Directors.

All applicants must submit the following documents: a Form SF-424B (“Assurances – Non-construction Programs”); the most recent audited financial statements; and, for those organizations that have filed a Form 990, the Form 990 that corresponds to the period covered by the financial statements.

The Bureau retains the right to ask for additional documentation of those items included on this form. Such information should be included at Tab F.

Officers, Trustees, and Key Employees: Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their applications the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). Applicants that have obtained exempt status but not yet filed a Form 990 must provide the portions of Form 1023 that identify these individuals.

Other Documents: Applicants should limit their additional documents to only those that are essential for understanding the organization and its approach to fulfilling the Placement Component of the Project. Do not include orientation manuals or other printed materials.

IV. REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals that meet all technical and format requirements will be evaluated for compliance with Exchange Visitor Program regulations and the guidelines identified herein. Bureau grant panels will review compliant proposals; the Office of the Legal Adviser or other offices may also review them. Final funding decisions are at the sole discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards (grants or cooperative agreements) resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the Project and the availability of funds.

The submission will be reviewed with the following review criteria in mind. These criteria are not ranked and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1. Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** The Program Narrative should exhibit originality, substance, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Reviewers will assess the degree to which proposals engage participants in community activities that involve skills development and leadership training. A detailed agenda and work plan should adhere to all guidelines referenced herein. Reviewers will also assess the degree to which the proposed outcomes of the project are realistic and measurable. Strategies should creatively utilize resources at the local level to ensure an efficient use of program funds.
- 2. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (e.g., selection of participants' host families and schools; program venue; and program evaluation) and program content (e.g., orientations, program meetings, resource materials and follow-up activities).
- 3. Placement Organization's Record/Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the Project's goals and outcomes. Reviewers will assess the applicant and its partners, if any, to determine if they offer adequate resources, expertise, and experience to fulfill program objectives. Partner activities should be clearly defined. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with reporting and regulatory requirements. Past performance of recipients will be considered. For new applicants, proposals should demonstrate capacity to participate in the Program. In addition, organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors must include a discussion of their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements. Proposals that fail to include the above information in their narrative will be deemed less or not competitive under this review criterion. ECA will review the record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq. of organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors as one factor in evaluating the record/ability of organizations to carry out successful exchange programs.

- 4. Multiplier Effect:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. Reviewers will assess ways in which proposals include innovative ideas to expose American communities to FLEX Program-related goals and activities that involve students, host families, and schools. This includes media outreach, visits to local and national government representatives, Internet-based applications and other interactions. Reviewers will also evaluate substantive plans to prepare FLEX Program students for their role as active, effective FLEX Program alumni.
- 5. Participant Monitoring:** Proposals must include a detailed monitoring plan (included at Tab E) that addresses Student, Local Coordinator, and Host Family monitoring. This plan must respond directly to the monitoring plan requirements set forth in the Statement of Work above.
- 6. Program Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. Reviewers will assess plans to monitor student progress and program activities, particularly in regard to intended outcomes identified in the RFGP. Grantees will be expected to submit quarterly reports, which should be included as an integral component of the work plan. The primary method of evaluation is E-GOALS. Proposals should also specify ways in which students will be encouraged to complete the mandatory end-of-the-year surveys administered through the E-GOALS system.
- 7. Cost-effectiveness/Cost sharing:** Reviewers will analyze proposed budgets for clarity and cost-effectiveness. They will also assess the rationale of the proposed budget and whether the allocation of funds is appropriate to complete tasks outlined in the Program Narrative. The overhead and administrative components of the program, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. Preference will be given to organizations whose proposals demonstrate a quality, cost-effective program.

As stated in the RFGP, the Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. In addition, ECA will review the record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq. of applicant organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors by ECA's Office of Private Sector Exchange. If it is determined that an applicant organization submitting a proposal has a record of not being in compliance, their proposal will be deemed technically ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process. If in compliance, the applicant organization's record of compliance will be used as one factor in evaluating the record/ability of organizations to carry out successful exchange programs.

ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA

The Bureau emphasizes the critical importance of the secure and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor Program and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all governing regulations. Therefore, applicants should explicitly state in their proposals that they will assist the Office of Citizen Exchanges in meeting all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program as set forth in 22 CFR Part 62. Any organization with experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor should discuss its record of compliance with 22 CFR Part 62, focusing on its

placement of exchange visitors in appropriate and fully-screened homes and its oversight of the local coordinators responsible for routine contact with program participants.

PLEASE NOTE: All regulation language quoted in this POGI is current as of date of publication. The Department of State is revising existing Secondary School Student regulations regarding the screening, selection, school enrollment, orientation, and quality assurance monitoring of exchange students as well as the screening, selection, orientation, and quality assurance monitoring of host families and field staff. Regulation revisions will be effective as of November 26, 2010. For more details, please visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges>. Any organization approved for funding will be responsible for complying with all regulations in effect during the time of the award.

V. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The Solicitation Package provides detailed instructions regarding the shipment and deadline for submission of a proposal. The RFGP indicates the date the complete proposal is due and the manner in which applicants must submit their proposals. **There are no exceptions to this deadline.** For further information, contact the Office of Citizen Exchanges: Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/PY, SA-5, Floor 3, Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037

Callie Ward, FLEX Program Officer: 202-632-6431; wardca@state.gov

Technical Format Requirements (if not submitting through grants.gov)

- Submit the original signed “Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424).”
- Provide eight (8) copies of the proposal package (one (1) original, two (2) fully tabbed copies, and five (5) copies with Tabs A through E only). Attachments that refer to program activities, evaluation, etc. should be included in all copies.
- Number all pages, including budget and addenda, and provide a Table of Contents.
- Use 8½” x 11” paper for the entire proposal package.